

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Recovery for family and friends often begins with a painful realization: our love, concern, and effort cannot create another person's recovery. We may have prayed, pleaded, protected, explained, covered consequences, or searched for the right words that would finally make someone change. Many of these actions came from sincere love. Yet over time, we discover that our attempts to manage another person's addiction have left us exhausted, resentful, fearful, or spiritually depleted. A new way of living requires more than good intentions. It requires surrender.

Saint Paul offers a helpful image for this transformation in this Sunday's second reading (Romans 6:3-11):

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For family members and friends, this can describe the death of old patterns that once felt necessary. Control, rescuing, denial, enabling, and over-functioning may have seemed like ways to keep life from falling apart. In recovery, we begin to recognize that these patterns cannot give us peace.

This movement reflects Step One in a unique way. We come to accept that we are powerless over another person's choices and that our lives become unmanageable when we try to fix or control what belongs to someone else. This is not indifference. It is truth. We can love deeply without taking responsibility for another person's recovery. We can remain compassionate without abandoning our own emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.

For many of us, this surrender feels like a loss. Letting go may stir fear that we are failing, giving up, or becoming cold. Yet surrender

is not the absence of love. It is love placed in proper order. When we stop trying to manage everything ourselves, we create space for God to act. We also begin to make healthier choices, such as speaking honestly, setting boundaries, seeking support, and allowing consequences to belong where they belong.

The Gospel reinforces this reordering of love (Matthew 10:37-42). Jesus teaches that following Him requires placing Him above every other attachment. For those in family recovery, this can be challenging because our loved one's crisis may have become the center of our attention. Christ invites us to root our identity and peace in Him first. From there, we can love others with greater freedom and clarity.

In practical terms, this new life is lived through small, consistent actions. We pause before reacting. We talk with a sponsor or trusted person before making fear-based decisions. We tell the truth without trying to force an outcome. We ask God for wisdom to know the difference between helping and controlling. These practices may feel unfamiliar, but they help us move from anxiety toward trust.

The Gospel's final image also matters. Jesus says that even a cup of cold water given to another will not lose its reward. In family recovery, service often becomes simpler and healthier than the rescuing we once practiced. We can offer kindness, prayer, encouragement, and truthful presence without taking over another person's life. We can support without controlling, love without enabling, and care without losing ourselves.

These small practices help us become steady, truthful, and spiritually available without becoming consumed by another person's decisions.

Recovery is not about becoming detached from love. It is about becoming free from the illusion that love means control. As we continue this journey, we are invited to let the old way die and to receive a new way of living. In Christ, we can become people who love with honesty, boundaries, compassion, and trust, one day at a time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have you recognized that love and effort alone could not change another person?

- What old patterns of helping, rescuing, or controlling are you being invited to surrender?

- How are you learning to love with greater honesty, boundaries, and trust?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

RESP. PS. Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

SECOND READING Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

GOSPEL Matthew 10:37-42